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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed faculty at the top business schools based on rankings in "Business Week" and "U.S. News and World Report" concerning their views on the "Business Week" rankings of business schools. The study used e-mail surveys which queried: (1) what level of satisfaction the faculty had with their school's current ranking; (2) whether the ranking had affected the institution's fiscal resources, student applications, or faculty recruitment; (3) whether rankings affected faculty research; and (4) how rankings affected teaching. The 734 usable responses were evaluated using both descriptive and multivariate analyses. Findings indicate that the rankings were important to respondents with 70 percent reporting that their school would like to improve its current ranking. However, faculty were unsure as to whether fiscal resources or faculty recruitment were affected by rankings. Differences in responses were also found according to faculty rank, sex, and school rank. Analysis of responses to an open-ended question identified four themes: less rigorous coursework as a result of feeling pressured to keep students satisfied; a resource shift away from PhD programs to Master's programs; a belief that the ranking methodology was flawed; and support for "Business Week" rankings. The questionnaire is appended as are tables analyzing responses. (Contains 57 references.) (DB)

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Is the tail wagging the dog? Business Week rankings and business school faculty.

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Introduction

Although national rankings of colleges and universities have existed since 1910, they were little known outside academic circles until 1983 when US News and World Report (USNWR) published its first reputational rankings of US colleges (Webster, 1985; Stuart, 1985). Since that time rankings and rankings magazines have proliferated and several have been estimated to generate $16 million in sales (McDonough, et. al., 1998). While rankings can serve as an incentive for the improvement of programs and facilities (Webster, 1992a&b), research has shown that institutions may attempt to change only the specific criteria utilized to calculate the ranking (Wright, 1990; Webster, 1992b; Hunter, 1995; Stecklow, 1995; Fombrun, 1996).

This study investigates the effects of the Business Week rankings on teaching and learning in 29 business schools. It builds on earlier research at one business school that found some faculty felt pressured to reduce the rigor of classes in order to keep students satisfied (Walpole, 1998). Business Week uses student satisfaction as one of two criteria for ranking schools, the second is the satisfaction of corporate recruiters. In these rankings, considered the most closely watched by business schools (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Fombrun, 1996), schools can improve their ranking by increasing the satisfaction level of their students.

Background

Scholars believe that many different constituencies -- alumni, potential donors, students, parents, and prospective students -- monitor and react to an

institution's ranking, prompting a variety of responses (Wright, 1990; Webster 1992a&b; Machung, 1995; studentPOLL, 1995). Adding volatility to the responses from constituencies, the ranking methodologies differ from one another and the formula for each ranking changes with each iteration, making comparisons between rankings or comparisons of a particular ranking from year to year difficult (Webster, 1992b; Machung, 1995).

Several researchers have focused on how rankings affect the admissions process. One consistent finding has been that rankings affect the number of applications colleges and universities receive (Wright, 1990; Webster, 1992b; Fombrun, 1996) and shape admissions policies (Hunter, 1995; studentPOLL, 1995). For this reason, some believe that colleges and universities may manipulate the reported data to improve their ranking (Wright, 1990; Hunter, 1995; Stecklow, 1995). Although the effect of rankings on applicant pools has been documented, rankings are not used by all prospective students. The percentage of students utilizing rankings in their decisions ranged from 41% to 54%. Students who are of traditional age, are Asian-American, and are from higher socioeconomic status families are more likely to use rankings (Hossler and Foley, 1995; studentPOLL, 1995; McDonough, et. al., 1998).

Rankings are used by students primarily because of the lack of alternative cross-institutional data (Webster, 1992a&b; Hossler and Foley, 1995). Since academic reputation is the most important criteria students use in deciding where to attend college (Sax, Astin, Korn, & Mahoney, 1995),

rankings may be used by students as an indicator of this (McDonough, et. al., 1998). Rankings are also important to colleges and universities and can serve as an incentive for institutional improvement (Webster, 1992a&b). Webster posited that institutions want to reap the benefits of a high ranking, and will improve their facilities and programs to raise their score.

Business schools, in particular, have made changes to improve students' level of satisfaction because of the importance of that satisfaction in the rankings done by Business Week (Fombrun, 1996). The Business Week rankings and USNWR's ranking of business schools have been the subject of several studies. Elsbach and Kramer (1996) examined how faculty made sense of their institution's ranking and the changes in their ranking. Dichev (1999) found that changes in Business Week and USNWR's ranking of business schools were not stable and quickly reverted back to the previous ranking. She attributed the reversal to new and incomplete information. The methodology used in USNWR's business school rankings has been considered suspect because it equates two very different measures: the students' GMAT scores and their starting salaries (Tracy and Waldfogel, 1997). Finally, Walpole (1998) found that rankings from both Business Week and USNWR affect school resource levels, including donations and the quality of student applicants. However, the Business Week ranking, because it utilizes the satisfaction of MBA students as one of only two criteria, places an added premium on student perspectives. Keeping students satisfied is crucial to a

school's ranking, and MBA students' satisfaction depends, in large part, on the programmatic instruction they receive.

Researchers have investigated the connection between student satisfaction and institutional ranking (Webster, 1992a; Grunig, 1997). Satisfaction is a measure of how well an institution compares to students' expectations (Grunig, 1997). These expectations are often shaped by the department's ranking; that is, students expect more from highly ranked academic departments. Yet, high expectations can be difficult for institutions to meet consistently, and can result in higher levels of student dissatisfaction (Fombrun, 1996; Grunig, 1997).

Business schools face an additional pressure when trying to keep students satisfied because MBA students often enroll to increase their earning capacity as well as their skill level, a phenomenon known as credentialling (Strober, 1990). Satisfying students interested in credentialling has been noted as a unique pressure that influences business school rankings (Fombrun, 1996). As an example, the University of Virginia's Darden business school fell dramatically in the 1998 Business Week ranking, a drop attributed in large part to student dissatisfaction (Business Week, No. 3600). Students complained that their coursework interfered with their interview schedules.

The importance of student satisfaction in the Business Week rankings left the faculty at one business school feeling pressured to accommodate student desires and concerned that accommodating student desires was reducing the academic rigor in courses (Walpole, 1998). That study was

conducted at one business school that had dropped several places in the previous ranking and so may not have been representative of the impact of rankings generally on business schools. This study extends the research on the impact of program ratings by surveying faculty at the top business schools based on Business Week and USNWR rankings.

Methodology

The business school rankings used to define the top 29 schools were those ranked in the top 25 in either Business Week or USNWR[1]. Although there was a great deal of overlap in the top 25 schools on each list, the schools were not identical, bringing the total number of schools included in the survey to 29. As noted earlier, Business Week's rankings were based on only two criteria, a survey of corporate recruiters and a satisfaction survey of MBA graduates.

For this study, surveys were sent via electronic mail (e-mail) to 3185 faculty at these 29 schools asking them about their level of satisfaction with the current rank of their school, as well as the impact of Business Week's rankings on resources, admissions, research and teaching. A total of 734 responses were received representing all 29 schools.

The survey instrument consisted of 35 items grouped under four broad questions (see appendix 1). Although no prenotification was sent, an introductory paragraph explained the study and gave directions for

[1] The Business Week rankings are from 1998 (Business Week, No. 3600, Oct. 19, 1998) and the USNWR are from 1998 (US News and World Report, Vol. 124, n8, March 02, 1998, 66-98). These were the most current rankings at the time of the study.

completing and returning the survey via e-mail. Instructions directed faculty to hit reply on their e-mail program and to indicate by typing an "X" in a blank line to the left of the statement those statements with which they agreed. The first question asked about the level of satisfaction they felt with their school's current Business Week ranking. The second question focused on resources and whether their ranking had affected: 1) the amount of fiscal resources they received, 2) the students applying to the program or 3) the recruitment of faculty. Faculty were asked how rankings affected their research in the third question, and the fourth asked how their teaching had been affected. Following the questions, faculty were invited to add written comments regarding the ranking and their answers to the questions.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to utilizing computer technology to collect data. E-mail surveys are often less expensive and have faster distribution and response times, (Foster, 1994; Fulop, Loop-Bartick, Rossett, 1997; Goree and Marszalek, 1995; Kiesler and Sproull, 1986; Rosenfeld, et. al., 1989; Sproull, 1986; Thach, 1995). They can be used to survey populations that can be difficult to identify (Marszalek and Goree, 1995) and can widen the geographic scope for interviews (Foster, 1994; Fulop, Loop-Bartick, Rossett, 1997). E-mail surveys can also be designed to allow automated data entry and prevent missing data (Rosenfeld, Booth-Kewley, Edwards, 1993). They are additionally valued because they are received more directly by respondents, are an asynchronous mode of communication which means respondents can complete and return the survey or interview answers

at their convenience, and because the lack of hard copy may promote more candid answers (Foster, 1994; Fulop, Loop-Bartick, Rossett, 1997; Kiesler and Sproull, 1986; Thach, 1995).

Disadvantages to computer and e-mail surveys include limiting sample demographics to those with knowledge of and access to computers and e-mail, less confidentiality, design challenges and potential loss of data due to unforeseen technical problems (Goree and Marszalek, 1995; Thach, 1995). Accurately determining the sample size and representativeness as well as calculating response rates can be difficult, especially if messages can be forwarded to other users or when the surveys are sent to listserves or posted on electronic bulletin-boards (Goree and Marszalek, 1995; Foster, 1994; Meehan and Burns, 1997). Some respondents may also less likely to acknowledge an e-mail survey (Sproull, 1986).

Another potential difficulty is response bias. Researchers using computer surveys have posited that respondents would feel less inhibited and therefore give more accurate answers to computer surveys (Waterton and Duffy, 1984). Research results, however, have been contradictory. While some studies found that the social desirability of answers is reduced using computers (Waterton and Duffy, 1984; Kiesler and Sproull, 1986; Synodinos and Brennen, 1988; Martin and Nagao, 1989; Walsh, et. al., 1992), others found no such difference (Erdman, Klein, and Griest, 1983; Kantor, 1991; Katz and Dalby, 1981; Lukin et. al, 1985; Millstein, 1987; Rozensky et. al, 1986; Skinner and Allen, 1983; Sproull, 1986; White, Clements and Fowler, 1985; Wilson,

Genco, and Yager, 1985), and still others found that using computers resulted in more socially desirable responses (Davis and Cowles, 1989; Lautenschlager and Flaherty, 1990; Schuldberg, 1988).

Studies comparing the response rates of e-mail surveys and traditional mail surveys have also had wide-ranging results. Three such studies targeted business school faculty. Tse et. al. (1995) surveyed business school faculty at the Chinese University in Hong Kong, and Tse (1998) individually carried out a similar comparison of e-mail response rates and traditional mail response rates. The 1995 study had an e-mail response rate of 6% and a traditional mail rate of 27%. The 1998 study had a higher traditional mail response rate, 52%, but a similar e-mail response rate, 7%. Tse attributed part of the low response rate to a lack of enthusiasm for e-mail in Hong Kong. Schuldt and Totten (1994) also compared e-mail and traditional mail surveys using a sample of business school professors. The e-mail response rate was 19% compared to 57% for traditional mail surveys.

Two other studies have had higher e-mail response rates, but still below those for traditional mail. Mavis and Brocato (1998) compared response rates with a sample of medical educators from a listserve group, 84% of whom held PhD's or MD's. The e-mail response rate was 56%, compared to 77% for traditional mail. Finally, Mehta and Sivadas (1995) drew a sample of internet users from electronic bulletin boards and divided them into five groups. The highest response rate was achieved with the traditional mail survey with prenotification and follow-up (80%), and the lowest was for the

e-mail group with no prenotification (40%). However, due to complaints from those who received e-mail surveys with no prenotification, the method was discontinued and only approximately 60 individuals were surveyed.

The sample of business school faculty in the present study is a population that often uses e-mail as a routine part of the work day. The surveys were sent out over a two week period, and the majority of the responses were received within two days of being sent. Of the 3185 sent out, 134 were returned because the addresses were not valid and no new addresses could be found. There were 34 refusals and 13 autoreplys, explaining that the faculty member was away on business, sabbatical, or vacation, with no further responses.

Because of the nature of the internet, with its relative ease of forwarding e-mail, each response was individually checked via institutional web sites to ensure the respondent was a targeted faculty member. Six responses were unidentifiable, two more were from faculty at non-targeted institutions, and one additional response was from a staff member at a targeted university. None of these responses were included in the analysis. Four responses included in the total were received via traditional mail. The total number of usable surveys received was 734, for a response rate of 24%. Of the usable responses, a very high proportion, 98%, contained no missing data.

The response rate compares favorably to previous e-mail surveys of business school faculty (Schuldt and Totten, 1994; Tse et. al, 1995; Tse, 1998),

but less favorably to other findings regarding e-mail surveys (Mehta and Sivadas, 1995; Mavis and Brocato, 1998). The response rate is, however, within the overall average of response rates to traditional mail surveys, which is 20% to 50% (Heberlein and Baumgartner, 1978).

The responding faculty are fairly representative of the sample population in terms sex (18% female in the sample versus 15% reported by NCES, 1997). The sample has a higher proportion of Full professors (44% compared to 28% nationally), and a lower proportion of non-tenure track faculty (9% compared to 22% nationally) (Digest of Educational Statistics, 1997). Faculty rank and sex were determined from the institutional web site or through telephone calls to the school.

The business schools in the survey were divided into five groups based on rank (schools ranked 1 to 5 were coded 5; 6 to 10 coded 4; 11 to 15 coded 3, 16 to 20 coded 2, and schools ranked 21 and lower coded 1). Faculty sex (male=2; female=1) and rank (professor=4; associate prof.=3; assistant prof.=2; non-tenure track=1) were also coded.

Analysis occurred in two steps. First descriptive analysis was performed including frequencies and two-way crosstabulations. Multivariate analysis consisted of four logistic regression equations, each with a different dependent variable inquiring about the effects of the Business Week ranking on faculty members' work. The dependent variable in the first equation was "keeping students satisfied is very important." In the second equation the dependent variable was "I feel pressured to accommodate the students'

desires," and in the third equation it was "I worry that accommodating students' desires may negatively impact the rigor of our courses." The final equation utilized "It is more difficult to balance my research and teaching" as the dependent variable. The independent variables in all three equations were the same: school rank, faculty rank, and sex. Logistic regression was an appropriate choice because of the dichotomous nature of the responses.

Results

Descriptive

The Business Week rankings are important to these faculty members, with 70% reporting that their school would like to improve the current Business Week ranking (see Table 1). Faculty were less sure if the ranking had affected the school or department's fiscal resources, with 48% reporting that they were not sure whether or not the ranking had an impact. Half of the respondents believed they had more good students applying as a result of the ranking. The respondents were more divided about the impact of rankings on faculty recruitment, although the largest group, 39%, saw no impact. The majority of faculty, 64%, believed that their research agenda had not been affected, although almost a quarter, 24%, felt the rankings made it more difficult to balance their research and teaching.

Insert Table One About Here.

When asked about the impact of the Business Week ranking on their teaching, 29% believed their school's ranking did not affect their teaching, but 46% agreed with the statement "keeping students satisfied is very important," and 36% reported feeling pressured to accommodate students' desires. Finally, 38% worried that accommodating students negatively impacted the rigor of their school's courses.

Not surprisingly, there were some differences in responses according to faculty rank, sex and school rank. More than half, 57%, of the Associate Professors believed that student satisfaction is very important (see Table 2). A majority, 51%, also reported worrying about the impact of rankings on course rigor. Both Associate and Assistant professors were slightly more likely than full professors or non-tenure track faculty to report that they felt pressure to accommodate student desires, 43% and 39% respectively. The Assistant Professors were also more likely to report difficulty balancing research and teaching (29%). Non-tenure track faculty were less likely to report believing student satisfaction was very important, feeling pressured, or worrying about the rigor of courses and more likely to report that the ranking did not impact their teaching (35% compared to 29% overall).

Insert Table Two About Here

Female professors were more likely than males to worry about the impact of rankings on the rigor of courses, 45% compared to 38% overall, as

seen in Table 3. Half of the women faculty, 50%, also reported feeling pressured to accommodate student desires. They were also more likely to report having difficulty balancing research and teaching (33%).

Insert Table Three About Here

School rank also was related to faculty responses, as can be seen in Table 4. Faculty in schools ranked in the top five were less likely to feel student satisfaction was very important, to feel pressured to accommodate student desires, to worry that accommodating students may impact course rigor, or to feel it difficult to balance research and teaching than were faculty in lower ranked schools.

Insert Table Four About Here

Regression:

In the regression results, school rank was a significant predictor in all four equations, sex of the faculty member was significant in three of the four, and faculty rank was significant only in the final equation, which had "difficulty balancing research and teaching" as the dependent variable (see Table 5). In all the equations, being in a higher level faculty position, being male, and being in a highly ranked school decreased the odds that the statement contained in the dependent variable was true. Therefore, female faculty in less highly ranked schools or faculty at the lower steps of the tenure

ladder were more likely to report that student satisfaction was very important, that they felt pressured to accommodate students, that they worried about the rigor of their courses and that it was more difficult for them to balance their research and teaching.

Insert Table Five About Here

Working at a lower ranked business school among the top 29 very significantly increased the odds that a faculty member reported difficulty balancing research and teaching as a result of the Business Week ranking ($p<.001$). Similarly, faculty at schools less highly ranked were also significantly more likely to report that student satisfaction was very important, that they felt pressured to accommodate students and that they worried about the rigor of coursework ($p<.05$).

Female faculty members were significantly more likely to report feeling pressured to accommodate students desires ($p<.001$), worrying about the rigor of courses ($p<.05$), and having difficulty balancing teaching and research ($p<.05$). Faculty's position on the tenure ladder was significant in only one equation, difficulty balancing research and teaching, with faculty holding lower rank being more likely to report such a difficulty ($p<.05$). One possible reason that faculty's position on the tenure ladder was not more predictive may be discerned from the crosstabulation results. Associate Professors were more likely than faculty holding other positions to report that keeping

students satisfied was very important and that they worried that accommodating students may negatively impact the rigor of their courses, the highest proportion of any faculty rank. This non-linear result will not be predicted by regression.

Additional Comments

Many faculty members added comments to the end of the survey responses, and there were four general themes to those comments. First, the most numerous and most passionate comments focused on the need to keep students satisfied, resulting in less rigorous coursework. One faculty member wrote:

> The B Week rankings have led to a stampede to keep students happy and meet their every whim... the curriculum is stuffed with meaningless courses full of drivel... so that content-wise, it is impossible for us to teach and examine students on material we did even as much as 10-11 years ago.

Another disgruntled faculty member believes:

> Rigor is no longer valued in the MBA program. Only happy students and entertainment in the class room. You cannot cold call, you can't be too rigorous.

Yet a third added: "The rankings have... subtly pushed faculty toward undesirable behavior -- dumbing down courses and emphasizing teaching cosmetics like color overheads."

The second theme of the comments was that resources have shifted toward the MBA programs and away from PhD programs, research and undergraduate programs. Several faculty members saw this as dangerous to the future of business schools. One faculty member explained:

> The problem is... the disproportionate reallocation of funds to cater to the MBA program... This has... already adversely impacted PhD programs severely... research has been definitely impacted adversely as it has been deemphasized in favor of the short term goal of pleasing the students... and the long term impact could be painful.

Another wrote: "Business Week does affect resources because the other programs in the school get ignored."

Yet another theme was the methodology of the Business Week rankings, which several faculty believe is flawed. According to one faculty member:

> The main problem with the BW rankings is that they are based on sampling methods and respondent pools that do not accurately reflect the quality of programs.

Another added:

> If schools are going to be ranked, they... ought to be ranked by a system that can be openly evaluated and is judged to be fair by... experts in the field. It is risky business letting journalists do this.

Finally, there were also several faculty members that wrote to support the Business Week rankings. One believes:

> The best part... is the healthy aspect of the competition involved. No program can rest on its laurels... As a result, everyone wins!

Yet another wrote:

> The Business Week rankings forced many research professors who didn't give a damn about teaching or MBA's to care. It has been a God send.

Discussion and Implications

There are several things apparent from these data. First, obtaining a high Business Week ranking was important to faculty, with 70% reporting

that they would like to improve their rank. Second, the Business Week rankings impact admissions, with half of the respondents reporting they had more good students as a result of the ranking, a positive effect for these schools.

Ranking is also having an impact on the teaching and learning process and on the work lives of some faculty members. Teaching is the process most obviously affected by the rankings. Less than 30% of faculty indicated that the ranking had no impact on their teaching. Almost half of the respondents believed that their teaching was affected because student satisfaction is a very important component of the Business Week ranking. Significant numbers reported feeling pressured to accommodate students and worried about the negative impact of such accommodations on course rigor. Many of the comments regarding student satisfaction and course rigor conveyed a high level of frustration on the part of faculty.

Nearly a quarter of faculty members responded that the Business Week ranking was affecting their work lives by making it more difficult to balance their research and teaching. The multivariate results indicated that specific sub-groups of faculty members, especially women and more junior faculty may be more likely to feel pressured or worried and to have difficulty balancing their research and teaching, a fact reflected in the comments as well.

The Business Week ranking is influential indeed. But it is also important not to conflate the impact of the rankings on teaching in business schools. Teaching has become more important in promotion and tenure

decisions in the past few years. Faculty in other disciplines have reported that students desire more classroom entertainment than in previous years (Altschuler, 1999; Walpole, 1998). In business schools, credentialling adds further pressure because students want good grades and good jobs (Strober, 1990; Fombrun, 1996), and past results indicated that faculty generally believe students are less interested in academic or intellectual enrichment (Walpole, 1998).

Still, the Business Week rankings seem to place an additional burden on the teaching and learning process, perhaps because the ranking is important to faculty members and they understand the importance of student satisfaction in achieving a high rank. Faculty attribute better students to the high ranking, and good students are a resource to business schools. Faculty members may want to improve their school's ranking because they anticipate benefits, such as more good students, from a high ranking. Resources such as good students and reputation are intertwined and mutually reinforcing, with highly ranked institutions receiving more resources, and larger amounts of resources going to highly ranked schools and colleges (Astin, 1993; Walpole, 1998). In business schools, not paying attention to student satisfaction could result in a fall in the ranking and fewer good students or other resources. Schools or departments that fall in the rankings, especially those that are not successful in rebounding quickly after a fall, may become trapped in a cycle of declining resources and dropping rankings which then reinforce one another and can be difficult to break (Walpole, 1998).

The student satisfaction variable, however, makes the Business Week ranking unique. It adds an explicit measure that both students and institutions can exploit. Although the survey asked faculty specifically about pressures associated with the Business Week ranking, several individuals added comments stating that many factors, including the increased importance in tenure decisions and the changing nature of students were converging to increase the pressure on teaching.

Webster (1992a&b) has argued that improvements to facilities and programs can result from rankings. But rankings that leave some faculty feeling pressured to reduce the rigor of classes can hardly be considered an improvement. Even thougl the majority of faculty did not report such feelings or concerns, 38% did so with women and lower-ranking faculty feeling disproportionately affected.

Rankings of academic departments, such as those in Business Week, are having an effect on teaching and research. Magazine rankings have one major purpose: to sell magazines. The fact that a commercial, profit-driven enterprise can affect faculty work lives is information that should be significant to administrators, researchers and magazine editors. Machung (1995) described what she saw as a "credible instability" in which publishers have a vested interest in change within the rankings from year to year to produce sales. Too much movement, however, would not be credible enough to generate sales.

Universities also have some responsibility. Many universities, and schools and departments within them, advertise their high rankings in admissions brochures, development efforts and websites. The business school websites were no exception. Many of the schools in this survey touted their high rankings on their home pages. While academics and administrators may grumble about the power or methodologies of the rankings, they also use the advantages that their rankings bring them.

Universities also have a responsibility for providing information on their institutions that potential applicants and donors can utilize to evaluate colleges and universities. Until another convenient means of accessing cross-institutional data is made available, magazine rankings are what alumni, potential students and potential donors will continue to use, along with other information, to make decisions regarding donating and applying. The ease and convenience of the rankings data, combined with America's cultural obsession with rankings of all kinds (McDonough et. al., 1998) have resulted in a for-profit industry that is impacting the teaching and research in colleges and universities.

Several important questions remain about the inclusion of a student satisfaction variable in a school's ranking. Students are an essential component of schools and departments, and their satisfaction should be taken into account, since dissatisfied students would be indicative of a department or school that needs attention. But the question of how to effectively

incorporate student satisfaction into a measure of educational quality has not been answered.

Student satisfaction is important to universities, as it should be, but it must be balanced against educational goals and pedagogical concerns. Having a significant portion of the faculty feeling pressured to accommodate students to achieve or maintain a ranking, even when that ranking is tied to resources, should be cause for reflection and concern by educators, administrators, students and magazine editors. Rankings may be here to stay, but we all must ensure that the tail does not wag the dog.

APPENDIX 1

I am an educational researcher interested in the effect of national rankings on faculty work lives. A qualitative study I conducted last year at a university indicated that business school faculty felt that the Business Week rankings had an impact on resources, research and teaching. I am attempting to examine those issues on a wider scale and so I am surveying business school faculty at institutions ranked in the top 25 of either the Business Week or the US News and World Report rankings. I know you are very busy. The survey is four questions and should take no more than five minutes. I would really appreciate your time and response. Your participation is voluntary. I do not anticipate any risks or benefits from this research, although the security of your response on the internet can not be guaranteed. All responses will be confidential. I will be presenting the results at a national education conference in April of this year and would be happy to send you a copy of the paper at that time if you so desire. Again, thank you very much for your time.

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To respond, please hit reply on your e-mail and check all that apply by moving your cursor to the appropriate line and typing the letter x.

1. My school or department:

_____ Is satisfied with our current Business Week ranking.

_____ Wishes to improve our current Business Week ranking.

_____ Is very concerned with our Business Week ranking.

2. The Business Week ranking my school or department received has impacted our ability to attract/obtain resources:

Fiscal:

_____ We have more fiscal resources.

_____ We have fewer fiscal resources.

_____ The ranking has not impacted the fiscal resources.

_____ I am not sure if the ranking has impacted the fiscal resources.

Students:

_____ We have more good graduate (MBA and PhD if applicable) students applying.

_____ We have fewer good graduate (MBA and PhD if applicable) students applying.

_____ The ranking has not impacted the applicant pool.

_____ I am not sure if the ranking has affected the applicant pool.

Faculty:

_____ It is easier to recruit excellent faculty.

_____ It is more difficult to recruit excellent faculty.

_____ The ranking has not impacted faculty recruitment.

_____ I am not sure if the ranking has affected faculty recruitment.

3. My research agenda has been affected by the Business Week rankings during the past several years because I have:

_____ More fiscal resources

_____ More good students.

_____ Fewer fiscal resources.

_____ Fewer good students.

_____ Because it is more difficult to balance my research and my teaching.

_____ My research agenda is not affected by the Business Week rankings.

_____ I am not sure if my research agenda is affected by the Business Week rankings.

4. My teaching has been affected by the Business Week rankings during the past several years because:

_____ Teaching is easier because I have better students.

_____ Students are satisfied with the ranking and are less demanding.

_____ Keeping students satisfied is very important.

_____ Students understand the value of their satisfaction.

_____ Students want me to teach them everything they need to know.

_____ Students are less willing to investigate or figure things out for themselves.

_____ Students want to cover fewer topics during the term.

_____ Students complain that the material is too difficult.

_____ I feel pressured to accommodate the students' desires.

_____ My teaching is not affected by the Business Week rankings.

_____ I am not sure if my teaching is affected by the Business Week rankings.

_____ I worry that other faculty in my school or department feel pressured to accommodate student desires.

_____ I worry that accommodating students desires may negatively impact the rigor of our courses.

Please add any additional comments:

Thank You!

Table 1: Frequencies of reported answers (20% or more)

Faculty Who Reported:	%
Satisfied with Ranking	20 (n=148)
Wants to improve ranking	70 (n=513)
Very concerned with ranking	26 (n=189)
We have more resources	22 (n=161)
Not sure if rankings impacted resources	48 (n=348)
No impact on resources	25 (n=186)
We have more good students applying	50 (n=366)
Not sure of the impact on the applicant pool	28 (n=206)
It is easier to recruit excellent faculty	21 (n=152)
No impact on recruiting faculty	39 (n=286)
Not sure about impact on recruiting faculty	29 (n=212)
Research is not impacted	64 (n=466)
More difficult to balance research and teaching	24 (n=177)
Keeping students satisfied is very important	46 (n=333)
Feel pressured to accommodate student desires	36 (n=263)
Worry other faculty feel pressured	29 (n=211)
Worry that accommodating will negatively impact rigor of courses	38 (n=270)
Teaching is not impacted	29 (n=208)

Table 2: Crosstabulations by faculty rank (%)

Faculty Who Reported:	Full Professor (n=323)	Associate Professor (n=152)	Assistant Professor (n=189)	Non-Tenure (n=67)
Keeping students satisfied is very important	41 (n=132)	57 (n=87)	47 (n=89)	37 (n=25)
I feel pressured to accommodate students' desires	33 (n=108)	43 (n=65)	39 (n=73)	25 (n=17)
I worry that accommodating students may negatively impact the rigor of our courses	35 (n=97)	51 (n=55)	35 (n=48)	26 (n=11)
It is more difficult to balance my research and my teaching	24 (n=78)	26 (n=40)	29 (n=55)	6 (n=4)
My teaching is not affected by the Business Week ranking	32 (n=102)	24 (n=36)	25 (n=47)	35 (n=23)

Table 3: Crosstabulations by Gender

Faculty Who Reported:	% All Faculty	% Women
Keeping students satisfied is very important	46 (n=333)	48 (n=64)
I feel pressured to accommodate students' desires	36 (n=263)	50 (n=66)
I worry that accommodating students' may negatively impact the rigor of our courses	38 (n=270)	45 (n=60)
It is more difficult to balance my research and my teaching	24 (n=177)	33 (n=44)

Table 4: Crosstabulations by school rank

(%)

Faculty Who Reported:	Schools Ranked 1-5 (n=150)	Schools Ranked 6-10 (n=109)	Schools Ranked 11-15 (n=140)	Schools Ranked 16-20 (n=133)	Schools Ranked 21+ (n=187)
Keeping students satisfied is very important	37 (n=56)	49 (n=53)	42 (n=59)	50 (n=67)	50 (n=98)
I feel pressured to accommodate students' desires	25 (n=38)	38 (n=41)	37 (n=52)	40 (n=53)	40 (n=79)
I worry that accommodating students may negatively impact the rigor of our courses	27 (n=41)	45 (n=49)	34 (n=48)	39 (n=52)	43 (n=80)
It is more difficult to balance my research and my teaching	15 (n=23)	20 (n=22)	24 (n=33)	28 (n=38)	31 (n=61)

Table 5: Odds Ratios[2] for Regression Equations

Variable Name	DV="Keeping students satisfied is very important" (n=733)	DV="Feel pressured to accommodate students' desires" (n=733)	DV= "Worry that accommodating students will negatively impact rigor" (n=721)	DV= "More difficult to balance research and teaching" (n=734)
Faculty Rank	.7975 (-.257)	.2609 (1.12)	.1470 (1.45)	.0260* (2.23)
Sex	.6078 (-.513)	.0002** (-3.68)	.0273* (-2.21)	.0020* (-3.09)
School Rank	.0428* (-2.02)	.0126* (-2.49)	.0268* (-2.21)	.0002** (-3.73)

[2] Ratio of the odds of the dependent variable being reported due to an a one-unit increase in the independent variable to the odds of the dependent variable not being reported without that change. Numbers in parentheses indicate the ratio of the regression coefficient to its standard error. *** p<.0001, **p<.001, *p<.05

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